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ABSTRACT

This evaluation report presents the results of a survey of staff members participating in a Title I bilingual education program in Buffalo. Included are the questions that were asked of bilingual teaching personnel and bilingual aides during the course of the evaluation. Specific issues addressed include the value of inservice programs, student selection criteria, student characteristics, classroom management, program coordination, and staff responsibilities. A discussion of each question summarizes the opinions of the staff members about the program and its impact. Recommendations made by the staff members and observations and recommendations made by the evaluator concerning the effectiveness and improvement of the program are outlined. (EB)

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Buffalo Public Schools Spanish-English
Program Evaluation 1977-1978

by

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Buffalo Public Schools Spanish-English
Program Evaluation 1977-1978

The format for this evaluation report is similar to the one used in the 1976-1977 report. A discussion of the program is organized around a set of questions taken from the description of the various program objectives and procedures stated in the Title I proposal. As with the previous report, these questions serve as the validation criteria required when using the Provus Discrepancy Model. In essence, the purpose of these questions is to determine whether the program operates in the field in the same way as it was proposed to operate.

As before, as many of the program personnel were interviewed as possible. Additionally, other school personnel were interviewed in order to determine the impact of the program. Where possible, classrooms were also observed.

In some cases, bilingual programs funded through sources other than Title I were in operation in the same schools. When these programs operated in the same proximity of the Title I program, these personnel were also interviewed. In all, the personnel from nine Title I schools were interviewed.

Following the discussion of each question, a section on Observations and Recommendations and a Summary is included.

QUESTIONS ASKED OF BILINGUAL TEACHING PERSONNEL

INSERVICE PROGRAMS

1. How valuable were the inservice programs?
2. Which were particularly helpful?
3. What topics would you like to see covered next year?

STUDENTS

1. How were your pupils selected?
 - Why are they in this program rather than a regular Title I Reading and Math Program?
2. When did your instructional program begin?
3. Who are the students in the 6-7-8 grades in your program?
 - Why are they still there by that time?
4. What is the average length of time students spend in the program?
5. How fluent are most of your children in English?
6. How fluent are most of your children in Spanish?

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

1. How much of the time do you spend working with your children in Spanish?
2. How many students do you see per day?
3. How do you divide your time between math instruction and reading instruction?
4. How long are most of your class periods?

5. How many classes per week do you have?
- Do the classes meet everyday?
6. How satisfied are you with your aide?
7. What specific activities does your aide do?

PROGRAM COORDINATION

1. In what ways do you work with the regular classroom teachers?
2. How do the regular teachers seem to feel about the program?
3. Are there any activities that you have specifically planned together for either individuals or small groups?
4. How does your work specifically complement the developmental program of the classroom teacher?
5. Do you ever have the opportunity to share the children's folders or work with their regular teacher?
6. In what ways has the social worker been of assistance to you?

QUESTIONS ASKED OF BILINGUAL AIDES

1. What are the major activities of your job?
2. Do you have enough help and assistance to do your work effectively?
3. What do you think are the most important things that you do in your work?
4. What factors prohibit you from doing a better job?
5. What recommendations would you make for changes in the job as aide.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED OF BILINGUAL PERSONNEL

INSERVICE PROGRAMS

1. How valuable were the inservice programs?

In all but one case, the staff felt that the inservice programs were quite valuable. They suggested, however, that the inservices be more frequent and that they be also made available to bilingual personnel funded outside of Title I funds--specifically, those funded under PSEN.

2. Which were particularly helpful?

Most of the staff felt that the math inservice programs were the most helpful to them. They liked learning how to use the new materials and equipment, and they also liked being shown how the materials were applicable to their regular classroom mathematics program.

3. What topics would you like to see covered next year?

Of the several topics that were mentioned, the most recurring was the request for workshops on Teaching English as a Second Language. The second most recurring was reading instruction geared for the bilingual child. Additional topics included activities for aides, more materials display, and additional work with the metric system.

STUDENTS

1. How were your pupils selected?

In all cases, the first criteria used was MAT scores. The second criteria was Spanish-surname. After this major screening, most teachers used additional measures to determine fluency in English. Based upon this multiple assessment, children who scored in the third or below stanine were either selected for the bilingual program or the Title I Comprehensive Reading and Math Program.

The intent of this question was to determine the major criteria used for selection. In previous years, the major criteria has been Spanish-surname, and it has been observed that some students would have benefited more by being in a regular reading and math program-- in other words, their problems with reading or math did not result from a language deficiency. It was recommended last year that a more objective criteria be used for the selection of students and I was pleased to see the improvement in that area.

2. When did your instructional program begin?

The proposal guidelines provided for the month of September to be used for testing and screening students and for instruction to begin the

first week in October. In all cases this criterion was met.

3. Who are the students in the 6-7-8 grades in your program?

The intent of this question was to determine the teacher's perception of the effectiveness of the program. If the 6-8 graders in the program were students who had been enrolled in the program from the early grades, the students either were not making sufficient progress to test out of the program or they were misplaced. The answers to this question varied greatly. Essentially, however, most agreed that the 6th, 7th, and 8th graders were primarily students who had been in the program previously. Some, however, were students who had transferred from other schools where this program was not available and a very small percentage of the students were new Non-English speakers.

4. What is the average length of time students spend in the program?

Most teachers did not know what the average length of time the students spent in the program was due to the fact that they have been shifted from school to school in their teaching tenure and the students themselves

have a high degree of mobility. Consequently, teachers have been unable to follow students in many cases. A question does arise, however, and that is why aren't adequate records kept so that they follow students from school to school. I know that students often leave schools without notifying their teachers, however, a request for these records should be made and those records should be made available and sent.

Those teachers who would hazard a guess said that they felt that students stayed in the program approximately two years. A few teachers, however, said that they felt that they always remained in the program. This was not to say that the students did not make progress but that the progress that they made in a year is not highly visible when they take tests comparing them with children in the regular classroom who have also made growth during the year. Consequently, their progress does not allow them to score out of the third stanine when compared to this group. This is a serious testing problem which needs to be taken into consideration and addressed.

5. How fluent are most of your children in English?
6. How fluent are most of your children in Spanish?

These two questions have been positioned together because these answers are complementary. The intent behind these questions was to assess the teachers' understanding of the implicit underpinnings of the bilingual program. Inherent in the theoretical concept is that children who are Non-English speakers, or rather deficient in handling the English language should be taught concepts in Spanish or perhaps explained concepts in Spanish so that they can then understand them and utilize them in English. This assumes a basic fluency in Spanish--an assumption which I feel, in many cases, is in error.

The responses to these questions were quite interesting, and in many cases rather contradictory. When asked, "How fluent are your children in English?", all but one teacher said that they were either very fluent or pretty fluent. When asked, "How fluent are your children in Spanish?", half of the teachers said that the students were not very fluent. Only two teachers described their students as being very fluent in Spanish. Two teachers also mentioned the lack of fluency

in either language, and several teachers mentioned that the children spoke a combination of Spanish and English.

I think that the contradiction is quite evident in the responses to these two questions. The implications, however, are not quite clear.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

1. How much of the time do you spend working with you children in Spanish?

The proposal states that a major objective is for the students to become fluent enough in English to test out of the third stanine in reading and math. If this is the objective, most of the teaching should be directed to teaching language fluency in the areas of reading and math. In all cases, the teachers reported that they spend most of their time instructing in English and that Spanish was used only as a means of concept development. Exceptions to this course were children who were total Non-English speakers.

2. How many students do you see per day?

This response varied tremendously. The responses ranged from 23-77.

3. How do you divide your time between math instruction and reading instruction?

The proposal guidelines call for reading instruction three days a week and math instruction two days a week. In general, these time restraints were met. There were some cases where teachers interpreted this more loosely depending upon students' schedules, their own schedules, and student needs.

4. How long are most of your class periods?

Again, there was much variation, however, the factors which contributed most to the variation were the age of the children and the restraints made by the upper grade level schedules. Most periods, however, were reported to be approximately forty-five minutes in duration.

5. How many classes per week do you have?

Most of the teachers met each class five times a week. The variations that occurred were a result of scheduling problems in the upper grades.

6. How satisfied are you with your aide?

In most cases, the teachers were very satisfied with their aide. They felt that they made a tremendous contribution, particularly those that lived in the immediate neighborhood,

with developing rapport and acting as a liaison between the community and the school. The only complaint that was made by a few teachers was that the aides did not have a good mastery of English. The teachers seem to feel that aides provide better role models when they too are fluent in English.

7. What specific activities does your aide do?
These activities varied widely, however, in no case was the aide providing initial instruction. The primary job of all of the aides was to reinforce material previously taught by the teachers. Other activities included were either clerical in nature or the construction of materials to be used in class.

PROGRAM COORDINATION

1. In what ways do you work with the classroom teachers?

Most of the teachers did not have a regularly scheduled time in which to work with teachers, however, all said that they did meet with the regular classroom teachers on an informal basis. The exchanges in these meetings varied from discussion of specific children to recommendations for the selection of materials useful for classroom instruction. Some of the

bilingual teachers also tried to keep up with the subject matter that the children were having in their regular classrooms so that they could reinforce areas that needed particular help.

2. How do the regular classroom teachers feel about the program?

In most instances the bilingual teachers felt that the teachers were very supportive of the program. The schools in which these feelings primarily occurred were those in which the teachers spent the most time discussing their work, their total program and the children's progress with the teachers. Those teachers who felt that the regular classroom teachers weren't especially supportive felt that the teachers would have rather seen the children in a regular reading and math classroom than in a bilingual classroom.

3. Are there any activities that you have specifically planned together for either individuals or small groups?

In almost all cases the teachers interpreted this to simply mean working with the teacher on established classroom material. They cited cases of reinforcing work done either in the regular classroom or in the bilingual classroom.

The intent of this question, however, was to determine if additional activities were jointly

planned together, such as working on plays, going on field trips, planning discussion groups, etc. From the responses received, it appears unlikely.

4. How does your program specifically complement the developmental program of the classroom teachers?

The responses to this question overlapped with the previous question. Teachers said that children would sometimes bring their textbooks to class for assistance, and that they would also try to reinforce what the classroom teacher was teaching. The bilingual teachers said that they frequently brought in supplementary resource materials related to the child's classroom work.

5. Do you ever have the opportunity to share the children's folders or work with their regular teacher?

Half of the teachers said that they did this during their monthly meetings (although half did not say they had monthly meetings in question 1); the other half said that they did this only as teachers requested information about a specific child.

The intent of this question was to determine the extent of use and the usefulness of the folders.

It appears that their use and usefulness to teachers other than the bilingual teacher is marginal at best.

6. In what ways has the social worker been of assistance to you?

The response to this question varied considerably. Some of the teachers felt that she was very helpful. The activities that they mentioned she had assisted them in were to take children and their parents to agencies, take sick children home, arrange parent-teacher conferences, make home visits, assist in determining the cause of problems at school. In a few cases, however, the teachers said that they had only seen the social worker once and felt that they had not benefited from her services at all.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED OF THE BILINGUAL AIDES

In general, this part of the evaluation interview was quite unsuccessful. Many of the aides did not appear to understand the questions that were being asked of them or simply did not know how to respond. I found many of them hampered by their lack of English and I felt hampered by not being able to communicate to them in Spanish. Consequently, this section is very brief and I am unsure about the reliability of the responses.

1. What are the major activities of your job?

The intent of this question was to determine whether the aides felt that a major part of their job was working with children, clerical duties, or materials development. Most of the aides responded that their major responsibility was to work with children and reinforce activities that the teachers initiated. When further queried, they also named other activities like record keeping, materials construction, etc.

2. Do you have enough help and assistance to do your work effectively?

All responded yes to this question.

3. What do you think are the most important things that you do in your work?

All responded that the reinforcement of the children's work was the most important. This

question may have been perceived by the aides as redundant.

4. What factors prohibit you from doing a better job?

I'm not sure that most of the aides understood the question. When the question was rephrased, they all responded that nothing prohibited them from doing a better job. I had hoped that they might have said increased inservices, or more planning time with the teacher, etc. This question may have been perceived as threatening--suggesting that they weren't doing a good job. This was not, of course, the intent.

5. What recommendations would you make for changes in the job as aide?

No recommendations were made.

To repeat, I feel that this aspect of the evaluation is the least reliable. Perhaps someone with a Spanish speaking background would be more successful in eliciting more informative responses.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Some of the teachers felt that the program was too ambitious. They felt that a better approach would be to teach language development rather than reading and arithmetic. Related to this, some felt that the program should be structured like the Comprehensive Reading and Math Program, in that students would receive instruction either in reading or math.
2. A recommendation was made that all new teachers and new aides receive an inservice which would not only provide information on program goals and objectives but would also provide information on instructional techniques and an introduction to the materials that are available.
3. Many would like the requirements for the aide position to include a high school diploma and fluency in English.
4. Beginning the program in kindergarten rather than in first grade was seen by many to be more beneficial.
5. It was suggested by many that time be allotted for bilingual teachers to get together and share ideas. This could be accomplished through regularly scheduled workshops.
6. Although this was not a specific recommendation, most teachers, when asked what recommendations they would make, included that they especially liked the DISTAR

program. Related to this, I would think that additional workshops to increase teacher effectiveness with this program would be helpful.

7. To increase the legitimacy of the program to the children and their parents, it was suggested that a regular report be sent home to the parents informing them of their child's progress.
8. Everyone recommended that inservices concentrating on teaching ESL and reading to bilingual children were greatly needed.

EVALUATOR OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The selection procedure for students has greatly improved since last year. Teachers were able to articulate means other than Spanish surname which were the determining factors for pupils entering the program.
2. Although the inservice programs were well liked, the reading inservices need to meet more of the specific needs of bilingual teachers. Most of the teachers felt that they had a fairly solid background in the theoretical aspects of reading but they needed more input in dealing with the special needs that bilingual children have. The problem is quite unique in that many of the children are not actually bilingual in the sense that they are fluent in two languages. The predominant case is children who are fluent in neither language and consequently, innovative techniques in language development and reading programs need to be developed.
3. There is definitely a need for an additional social worker. If the social worker is to do the many necessary activities such as taking parents to agencies and translating for them, making home visits, acting as a liaison between community and school, etc., the job is much too big for one person. An additional one and one-half time person is needed.

4. The teachers seem to value the program highly and all of their recommendations were positive ones which could strengthen the program. In the classrooms that I observed, the children seemed to be enjoying their work and all were participating in instructional activities. One of the most positive benefits of the program seems to be the development of the children's self-concept and positive attitudes toward school in general.
5. A better means of evaluating the aides and their ability to perform their tasks needs to be developed. In general, I felt little usable information was obtained from their interviews.

SUMMARY

The program as it presently exists is filling a need which many bilingual children have. The teachers seem competent and dedicated to the program. The program could be improved, however, by obtaining additional funds to hire an additional one and one-half time social worker.